



3261 Richmond Ave #119
Staten Island, NY 10312

(800) 937-8888
info@WeStutter.org

WeStutter.org



Interviewing Guide For Employers

People who stutter make great hires. They bring the same drive, intelligence, and potential as more fluent peers. But interviews can be especially tough for PWS; they're often one of the most high-pressure speaking situations out there. How someone stutters in one moment doesn't reflect how they'll communicate day-to-day on the job.

Reviewing and adapting your interview process can help ensure it's inclusive and allows every candidate a fair shot. This guide offers practical tips to help you do just that.

WHAT IS STUTTERING?

Stuttering is a speech difference where the natural flow of speech is involuntarily disrupted. This can involve sound repetitions, prolongations, or silent blocks. Severity varies between individuals and may also change depending on the situation. Stuttering does not interfere with a person's ability to communicate ideas clearly and effectively. Many PWS excel in leadership, sales, customer service, and other communication-focused roles. Fluency is not a requirement for strong communication or professional success.

CREATING A SUPPORTIVE INTERVIEW EXPERIENCE

Provide Reasonable Accommodations

Providing reasonable accommodations during interviews creates a fair and inclusive process. These simple adjustments can ease communication pressure:

- **Extra time:** If an interview is scheduled for one hour, consider adding 5–15 minutes to reduce time pressure on the candidate.
- **Alternate communication options:** High-pressure situations, like interviews, can lead to an increase in stuttering for some people, which can feel frustrating and make it harder for them to express their full thoughts. Offer the candidate a way to respond in writing if they prefer, especially for complex or multi-part questions.
- **Flexible formats:** Some PWS may feel more comfortable with a video interview, audio-only interview, or a phone call. Ask what works best for them.



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Encourage Disclosure Without Pressure

Including a brief note in your interview invitation signals your support and creates a more welcoming environment for the candidate.

For example: *"If you'd like to request any accommodations for the interview, please feel free to let us know."*

Listening & Asking Questions

- Listen attentively and wait for the person to finish.
Don't interrupt or complete sentences.
- Focus on the content of their answers rather than how they're spoken.
- Maintain natural eye contact, even when the person is stuttering.
- If you're unsure how to best support a candidate who stutters, it's okay to ask respectfully.

ADDRESSING UNCONSCIOUS BIAS

Be mindful of unintentional biases that associate fluency with confidence, intelligence, or competence. Stuttering is a difference in how someone speaks, not in what they're capable of. Evaluating candidates based on their qualifications, not their fluency, leads to more equitable hiring decisions.

LANGUAGE MATTERS

- Use respectful, person-first language (e.g., "person who stutters").
- Avoid saying someone "suffers from" or is "afflicted by" stuttering.
- Follow the candidate's lead if they bring up their stuttering during the conversation.

PEOPLE WHO STUTTER HAVE UNIQUE STRENGTHS

Many people who stutter bring a unique set of strengths developed through navigating a world that often misunderstands speech differences:

- Patience and perseverance
- Strong empathy and awareness of others' needs
- Excellent listening skills
- A deep appreciation for preparation
- Insight into effective communication strategies